

LAYING THE GROUNDWORK

A laboratory's most important assets are its people. During the start-up phase of the new APIN laboratory at Jos University Teaching Hospital, APIN sponsored a three-week training workshop that covered topics ranging from principles of laboratory safety, to HIV testing techniques, to data management procedures.

Dr. Jean Louis Sankalé, APIN senior researcher and designer of the new laboratory, provided an overview of such basic yet essential details as equipment training, posting of protocols, freezer organization, bio-safety bag use, and waste classification. Mr. Chris Mullins, a laboratory manager in Professor Phyllis Kanki's laboratory at the Harvard School of Public Health, led tutorials on both HIV testing procedures using Western blot and data management using FileMaker Pro database software.

As part of APIN's collaboration with Senegal, Dr. Papa Alassane Diaw, a biologist from CHU Le Dantec in Dakar, led the training on cell separation and use of Dynabeads, a procedure for measuring CD4⁺ cell counts. And Dr. Mame Awa Touré, from Senegal's Ministry of Health, lent her expertise in programs in antiretroviral therapies and the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV. ■



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Celebrating an Enhanced Infrastructure

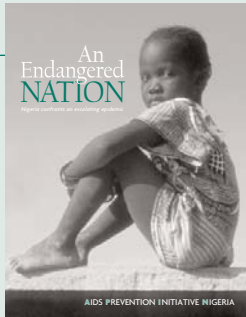
FOR NEARLY A DECADE, THE BUILDING HAD stood empty, the casualty of a funding crisis. When APIN researchers first entered the space in the summer of 2001, they found the bare floors coated with dust. Working closely with colleagues at Jos University Teaching Hospital (JUTH), they soon transformed the building into an updated AIDS laboratory, stocked with the latest equipment.

JUTH hosted the commissioning of this new APIN laboratory in early December, to help commemorate World AIDS Day. Among the visiting dignitaries were the Honorable Minister of Health A.B.C. Nwosu; the new commissioner of health, Barrister John Mogaji; and Vice-Chancellor Monday Mangywat. JUTH's chief medical director, Dr. Daniel Iya, served as the chief host.

The opening ceremony and ribbon cutting were followed by a tour of the laboratory. Special attention was paid to the CyFlow machine that MTN Nigeria had donated; Mr. Calytus Okoruwa, the company representative who attended, was warmly thanked.

Also in attendance at the festivities were representatives from the Association for Reproductive and Family Health, the Halt AIDS Group, the Harvard School of Public Health, the Ministry of Health, the Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research, Plateau State Specialist Hospital, the Society for Women Against AIDS in Nigeria, STOPAIDS, and University College Hospital in Ibadan. ■

ABOVE: The commissioning of APIN's laboratory at Jos University Teaching Hospital featured traditional dancing, a ribbon cutting, and inspirational speeches.



APIN ISSUES NEW BROCHURES

APIN recently produced a series of brochures aimed at educating a broad audience about its programmatic goals and activities. The brochures were distributed as part of APIN's outreach on World AIDS Day. Extra copies are available from APIN's Boston and Ibadan offices; a PDF of the general brochure, pictured above, is also available at www.apin.harvard.edu. ■

GETTING VALUE

The Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research (NISER), in conjunction with APIN, recently issued *Costing of HIV/AIDS Prevention Initiatives in Nigeria*, a report on the cost-effectiveness of prevention strategies that have been tried in Oyo, Plateau, and Lagos states. The report touches on such initiatives as social marketing of condoms, mass media outreach, AIDS education in schools, and peer education of commercial sex workers. Copies of the report are available from Dr. Olakunle Odumosu (odumosu@niser.org.ng). ■

Mapping Out the Future

APIN'S ADVISORY COUNCIL CONVENED IN Abuja in September to review progress from the first phase of the program and to examine the fit between APIN's objectives and national priorities on AIDS. They agreed that APIN was making significant progress in addressing six of the eight priorities identified by the Nigerian government for HIV/AIDS prevention and control.

As APIN embarks on the second phase of its program, Council members agreed that its overall goal should remain the same: to curb the growth of the HIV epidemic in Nigeria by promoting scientifically sound prevention initiatives and developing the capacity of Nigerian institutions. In addition, APIN will now provide targeted support to ensure that Nigeria's treatment programs for people with HIV are both effective and scientifically sound.

Council members discussed specific plans for the transition and preliminary phase of each APIN subproject. They agreed that, during Phase II, APIN should be guided by four priorities: consolidation of ongoing work in the three target states of Phase I, with a gradual expansion

to two or three additional states; a focus on strategic issues in which APIN has a comparative advantage; technical support to ensure a scientifically sound approach to the treatment of people with HIV; and technical assistance and training in support of Nigeria's strategic plan for HIV prevention.

Council members further endorsed a number of earlier recommendations, such as the development of more structured administrative policies for many APIN activities, including training programs, workshops, and programmatic reporting for subcontractors. APIN has also established a second office in Abuja, to allow Dr. Oluwole Odutolu, its senior program manager, to facilitate communication with government agencies there. The APIN office in Ibadan will be retained for enhanced program management.

At the end of the meeting, Council members approved the final Phase II program and signed an official memorandum of understanding.

The next Advisory Council meeting will coincide with a vaccine think tank cosponsored by APIN and the Harvard AIDS Institute, to be held in Abuja in mid-February. ■

Outreach



Dr. Oluwole Odutolu (left), APIN's senior program manager, participated in a phone-in program on AIDS-related stigma and discrimination with host Gboyega Akosile of Lagos Television. To help commemorate World AIDS Day and raise AIDS awareness, several Lagos television stations interviewed both Dr. Odutolu and Professor Phyllis Kanki, director of APIN.



BRIEFING THE MEDIA

To encourage coverage of the HIV epidemic on World AIDS Day, APIN, with support from the Development Communications Network in Lagos, hosted a media briefing with Professor Babatunde Osotimehin, chairman of the National Action Committee on AIDS; Dr. Remi Desalu, special assistant to the Lagos State governor on HIV/AIDS; and Dr. Oluwole Odutolu, APIN's senior program manager. The program included a feedback and brainstorming session with more than 50 journalists. ■

From Policy to Action

IN OCTOBER, APIN HELD A WORKSHOP IN Boston on the Policy and Institutional Capacity Module of Phase II. Participating were officials from the University of Ibadan, representatives of the Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research, and faculty members from the Department of Population and International Health (PIH) at the Harvard School of Public Health.

One of APIN's programmatic goals, participants agreed, is to strengthen local capacity in Nigeria by using sound analysis to guide programs and advocacy efforts. Professor Michael Reich of the Harvard School of Public Health noted the importance of political analysis in governing policy decisions. Against the political background, he said, good data does not automatically result in good policy, and sometimes good policies are made even in the presence of bad data. He then introduced PolicyMaker software as a tool for analyzing the politics surrounding a policy, devising strategies, and identifying other influences and players.

Dr. Soji Adeyi, APIN's associate technical director, suggested that the problem in Nigeria is not a lack of policies, but the quality and implementation of the policies that do exist. He noted several possible barriers to policy implementation: statements about AIDS being viewed as just rhetoric; the wariness of policy makers in viewing the agencies that provide evidence for proposed policies; the lack of a sense of ownership on the part of policy makers; and the failure of analysts to communicate effectively with politicians.

Participants agreed that epidemiologic and economic evidence were not enough to place AIDS policies on the political agenda. Consideration should also be given to the political aspects of the issue.

Among the many presentations from the PIH faculty, Prof. Peter Berman led a discussion of the concept of developing a National AIDS Account for Nigeria. Prof. Ajay Mahal listed the advantages of expanding the survey instrument to address other issues, such as the impact of AIDS on different social parameters. Dr. Thomas Bossert presented the decentralization module and its implications for AIDS program assessments and capacity building at local levels. And Dr. David Canning highlighted possible areas for investigating the economic impact of AIDS.

To emphasize the power of the mass media, Dr. Yaa P. A. Oppong of the Harvard Center for Population and Development Studies presented her research on how the media has affected the HIV epidemic in Ghana, influencing both members of the public and key decision makers.

The group used the three-day workshop as an opportunity to discuss the idea of establishing a Center for Research and Policies on AIDS and Development in Nigeria.

Participants agreed that a coordinating committee should be created to explore the issue further.

Following the meeting, participants have been collaborating on work plans for implementation in early 2003. Each topic area has a Nigerian coordinator as well as a counterpart at Harvard. ■

Good data does not automatically result in good policy, and sometimes good policies are made even in the presence of bad data.

ABOVE: Members of the Policy and Institutional Capacity Module Group met in October to explore a range of policy considerations for Nigeria. From left: Ms. Hope Bryer, Professor Oladimeji Oladepo, Professor Phyllis Kanki, Professor Joshua Adeniyi, Dr. Soji Adeyi, Professor David Olu Ajakaiye, Professor Michael Reich, Dr. Olakunle Odumosu, Professor Abel Idowu Olayinka, Professor Isaac Adewole, Dr. Clifford Odimegwu, and Dr. Mary Ebunlomo Walker.

MOTHER AND CHILD REUNION

APIN participated in the 2002 Conference of the Society of Gynecology and Obstetrics of Nigeria (SOGON), held in Abuja in November. During the opening ceremony, Dr. Oluwole Odutolu, APIN's senior program manager, noted the dovetailing of the conference theme—reducing maternal mortality—with one of APIN's primary goals: to reduce HIV transmission from mothers to children. He also described APIN's efforts to provide training, technical assistance, and financial support to the eight national prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) sites.

"We will continue to collaborate with such organizations as SOGON," said Dr. Odutolu. "Such partnerships will go a long way to reducing HIV in Nigeria and no doubt reducing maternal mortality as well." ■

A Critical Donation

MTN NIGERIA LTD. RECENTLY DONATED TWO FLOW cytometers worth a total of \$60,000 to the APIN laboratories at University College Hospital in Ibadan and Jos University Teaching Hospital. CyFlows are used both to determine CD4⁺ cell counts, an indica-

tor of the level of immunologic capacity and competence of people with AIDS, and to monitor responses to antiretroviral (ARV) therapies.

A recurrent issue in the Nigerian National ARV Access Initiative has been the cost and availability of laboratory tests, which are important for monitoring improvements in clinical status and for determining tolerance, adherence, and drug resistance.

As important as these tests are, people with AIDS who could benefit from this federal program have been hindered by the sheer cost of these tests. In addition, some ARV centers have no facilities for measuring viral load, and few have modern equipment for measuring CD4⁺ cell counts, thus compromising the clinical management of people on ARV treatments.

CyFlow machines, manufactured by Partec in Germany, combine reliability with cost-effectiveness. The cost of determining a CD4⁺ cell count using a CyFlow machine is US\$2, rather than the standard US\$25.

"MTN's donation is very generous," said Professor Phyllis Kanki, director of APIN. "The equipment will benefit not only our research projects on surveillance, but also the national prevention-of-mother-to-child transmission program and the ARV centers."

"MTN recognizes that up to 50 percent of its workforce are below 25 years of age, and the implication of HIV/AIDS gaining root within the organization can be catastrophic," said Mr. Adrian Woods, chief executive officer of MTN Nigeria. "Therefore every cent spent on HIV/AIDS prevention is a good investment. As a responsible corporate citizen, MTN owes Nigeria and Nigerians the service it is providing through the donation of the CyFlows."

In addition to donating flow cytometers to hospitals, MTN provides HIV information to its staff and maintains condom-dispensing machines in all its workplaces. ■



SMOOTH OPERATOR: Mr. M. A. Muazu, a medical and laboratory scientist at Jos University Teaching Hospital, quickly became adept at operating the new CyFlow machine.

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Outlook

The AIDS Prevention Initiative in Nigeria, a program of the Harvard School of Public Health, is supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

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